



Macquarie Bank

Future Problem Solving Program

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Individual Community Problem Solving Rationale and Explanation

The Individual Community Problem Solving component allows the Macquarie Bank Future Problem Solving Program to fill an essential role by providing the needed guidance and structure for all levels of service learning. By providing a framework for individual service learning, the Macquarie Bank FPSP can make great inroads into classrooms and youth organizations throughout Australia and Southeast Asia.

The Individual Community Problem Solving component outlines possible service activities for individual students at three levels of involvement:

- Community Service
- Community Exploration
- Community Action

Individual Community Problem Solving provides a methodology - the creative problem solving process – that encourages a deeper and more meaningful experience for the student. FPS offers a model for investigating the need area and developing an effective plan of action.

The program materials include suggestions for selecting and implementing an individual service project as well as guidelines for submitting a competitive entry. The Individual CmPS component provides an opportunity for celebration through its affiliate program competition wherein the individual student is recognized and rewarded for exemplary work at all three levels of involvement.

Service learning enjoys the spotlight in education. More and more schools, both public and private, mandate service hours as a condition of promotion and graduation. In addition, many youth groups and community organizations require youth service for advancement, awards or scholarships. All too frequently, the service is done on an individual basis with little or no structured guidance. The majority of individual service experiences do not follow a problem solving focus; hence, there is less likelihood of extensive personal growth, future commitment to the service area and student empowerment.

Educators recognize the educational gains when a student is actively involved in a meaningful, relevant service experience. Many service learning initiatives, however, do not differentiate between the different types of service learning or provide the necessary structure and support for the service experience. The Individual Community Problem Solving component will serve to bridge that gap.

Community Problem Solving also has direct relevance to international secondary school curricula. As has been confirmed in discussions between FPSP Australia and the administrators of the International Baccalaureate in Australia, the individual CmPS program provides an ideal structure for students to address some of the individual course requirements within the International Baccalaureate, both in the Middle Years program and the Diploma course at senior level.

There are various ways in which individual service can be carried out. In Australia, as part of the Macquarie Bank Future Problem Solving Program, students may submit an Individual Community Problem Solving Report based on any one of these three options.

In Community Service, students complete a specified number of volunteer hours to meet the designated service requirements. This type of service learning usually takes two forms—direct service and advocacy service.

- Direct service might include such activities as picking up litter in town parks, shelving books in the library, volunteering in a hospital or nursing home, or cleaning up graffiti.
- Advocacy service involves the student collecting service hours by volunteering time to aid nonprofit agencies. This can include volunteering for organizations such as the Kidney Foundation, Cancer Society, MADD, Just Say No and Meals on Wheels.

Participation in direct service or advocacy service usually increases an awareness of community needs in the student that contributes to service-specific learning.

The second type of service learning, Community Exploration, connects classroom learning to real-life situations. Many middle and high schools are incorporating service learning into the curriculum by tying the student service to an activity related to a specific area of study through a broad spectrum of classes including civics, art, science, history, health, language arts, reading and computer technology. Community Exploration can involve internships, outdoor or environmental education, and other types of experiential education in which the students learn by doing. The students gain academic credit and work skills. They learn about their communities and how things operate in the real world. The community benefits directly from the actual service provided by the students as well as indirectly from the societal benefits of the students positively engaged in their community.

Community Action is the highest level of service learning. Because of the depth of the services provided and the resources involved, a team of students usually works together to complete a Community Action project. However, it is possible for an individual student to effectively carry out a Community Action project. The student goes beyond supplying a curriculum-related service to analyzing the situation, generating new ideas and implementing a difference-making plan of action. In the process the student develops complex problem solving abilities, advanced communication skills, the ability to connect knowledge across the disciplines and the perseverance to overcome obstacles. In Community Action the interaction between the student and community flows in both directions. This interaction leads to a broader community impact and the highest level of real world learning. It also fosters a reciprocity in which both the student and community become the learner and recipient of the service experience. Involvement in Community Action empowers the student in his/her continuing ability to make a difference and thus become a more responsive, effective citizen. The community, in turn, develops a respect and appreciation for the positive change brought about by the student and begins to identify youth as valuable community resources.

Due to the depth of study required in an individual Community Action service learning activity, only those students in each division who submit a Community Action report will be eligible for invitation to the Final of the Macquarie Bank FPSP in Australia. The winner in each division is then eligible to be invited to represent Austrakia at the FPSP International Conference in the Individual CmPS competition.